

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, August 27, 1906, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Beinn Bhreagh, C. B. Monday, August 27, 1906. Mrs. A. Graham Bell, 1331 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, D. C. Dear Mabel:

The house is strangely quiet since all have gone. Grace, Gracie and Gardiner left this morning and I am mortified not to have seen them this morning to say good-bye. I adopted my usual plan of going to bed early expecting to rise at day-break and remain up to greet them — but alas “the plans of mice and men gang aft alee” — I tossed about all night and fell asleep in the early morning. When I awoke they were all gone. I am glad to have had this chance of coming closer to them quietly here — and wish they could have remained longer. I shall miss them very much.

My restless night and headachy day are the result of an experiment upon myself. I spent Saturday night at house-boat — and yesterday morning I found McDermid enjoying a plate of baked beans for his breakfast. I enjoy beans too and said “The effect of beans and peas upon me may be simply the result of imagination — let us make an experiment and note whether the results tally with expectation.” So I took a moderate helping myself — and sure enough last night I was troubled with flatulence and irregularity in the beating of the heart which prevented me from sleeping till nearly day light. I left the window blinds up so as to be awakened by day light — but unfortunately slept in the light without any eye-cover and have been suffering all day from headache in consequence.

It is mortifying to me not only to have failed to rise in time to see Grace off — but also to have suffered in consequence of the attempt. The “Sunday letter” too which I had hoped to

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write to you in the early morning hours was sacrificed — and you will be thinking I do not care for you any longer — and don't have you in my thoughts.

The new “Carbarettor” (don't know how to spell it) arrived this morning and turns out to be a great improvement. The gasoline motor went today as it never did before. In fact I must confess to misgivings regarding the motor. Although the action was regular — it rotated with alarming rapidity and I formed my plans for safety in the event of an accident. In spite of this the propellers (on the first or most rapid gearing) rotated more slowly than in former experiments and we were unable to make way against the wind. The comparatively slow rotation of the propellers combined with the rapid rotation of the motor — indicates I think that the driving belt slipped so that we did not get the benefit of the full power of the motor — which was expended simply in alarming me! I said “nothink to nobody” regarding this last point and I wonder whether Mr. Grosvenor experienced the same emotions. He was my fellow passenger on the Ugly Duckling and we sat side by side. I, at least, felt that I would be more comfortable if I could place a greater distance between myself and the motor — 3 but, on account of limited space this was impossible — excepting by diving overboard. I have a higher respect for the power of that little motor — and hope that by the application of suitable gearing we may be able to utilize its full power on the propellers.

We were all shocked today to hear that Mr. Henry McCurdy died this morning in Sydney. I saw him not long ago and he seemed in the best of health. He was taken ill on Friday and the doctor diagnosed the case as appendicitis, but did not advise an operation. We do not yet know whether or not an operation for his relief was attempted.

With much love to your mother, and Daisy and David and little Alexander — and with an armful for yourself.

Your loving husband, Alec.